

"Supermarket Trolley"

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Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to supermarket trolleys or carts.

More in particular the invention relates to such a trolley of the kind comprising a base made of moulded plastic material with wheels and a support formed integral with the base and including two lateral uprights connected superiorly by a cross bar, and a basket container also made of moulded plastic material connected at an end to said lateral uprights of the base.

Supermarket trolleys of this kind are described and illustrated, for example, in international patent application WO-97/30880 and in European patent application EP-A-0916563 in the name of Comital Srl.

Summary of the invention

The present invention aims at obtaining an improvement over such known trolleys, in particular regarding the economy in the manufacture of its parts and the assembly thereof.

A particular aim of the invention is to reduce the mass of the trolley, and consequently the material required for its production, eliminating parts which are accessory or redundant for purposes of the stability and structural strength of the trolley.

An additional particular aim of the invention is to obtain a carriage of the type defined above in which the union between the support of the base and the basket is achievable without using auxiliary retaining organs, and in simple, easily automated ways.

Another particular aim of the invention is to obtain a trolley of the type defined above provided with an essential

structure, hence easily manoeuvred by users and by the personnel of the supermarket within which it is employed.

According to the invention, these and other aims are achieved thanks to the fact that the two lateral uprights and the aforesaid end of the basket have respective mutually facing surfaces formed substantially with comb like formations, mutually complementary and mutually meshing by effect of a relative coupling between said basket and said support when the trolley is assembled.

The comb like formations advantageously comprise a plurality of elongated projections, generally in said direction of coupling and possibly slightly angled relative thereto.

According to another advantageous aspect of the invention, the two lateral uprights and the end of the basket are also advantageously formed with groove and tongue elements able to engage each other as a result of the meshing between said comb like formations.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Further features and advantages of the invention shall become more readily apparent from the description that follows with reference to the accompanying drawings, provided purely by way of non limiting example, in which:

- Figure 1 is a schematic perspective view of a supermarket trolley according to the invention,
- Figure 2 is an exploded view of Figure 1,
- Figure 3 illustrates, partially and in enlarged scale, two details of Figure 2, and
- Figure 4 is a horizontal section view in enlarged scale, according to line IV-IV, of Figure 1.

Detailed Description of the Invention

With reference to the drawings, the number 1 globally designates a supermarket trolley according to the invention essentially comprising a base 2 and a basket container 3.

The base 2 is constituted by a single piece of moulded plastic material defining a structure substantially shaped as a double "L", with two horizontal branches 4 anteriorly connected to each other by a short transverse member 5 and posteriorly joined to two substantially vertical uprights 6 mutually distanced and separated, extending upwards with a slight curvature.

Wheels at least partly capable of swivelling 7 are positioned respectively underneath the external ends of the horizontal elements 4 and underneath the lower ends of the uprights 6.

The number 28 indicates a shelf fitted between the two horizontal elements 4, behind the transverse member 5.

As illustrated in greater detail in Figures 3 and 4, the inner surface 8 of each upright 6 facing the other upright 6 is formed, approximately in its upper end, with a series of integral elongated projections 9, mutually parallel or more advantageously slightly diverging from each other or also tapered, directed substantially vertically or forming a small angle relative to the vertical. Said projections 9 define, for each upright 6, a respective comb like formation 10.

Below the comb like formation 10 the inner surface 8 of each upright 6 is formed with two seats, respectively upper seat 11 and lower seat 12 having for instance broadly quadrangular section, whereof the upper seat 11 is slightly more rearwards and has smaller dimensions than the lower seat 12.

The basket container 3 is also formed by a single piece of moulded plastic material with lateral walls 13, bottom wall 14 and front wall 15 with grid configuration.

As Figure 2 shows, the basket 2 is open posteriorly and is formed with two elongated elements 16 which extend inferiorly underneath its bottom wall 14 with respective legs 17. Each element 16 is formed in correspondence with its

exterior surface 19 with a plurality of elongated integral projections 18 substantially identical to the projections 9 of the uprights 6 and positioned in complementary fashion thereto. Said projections 18 constitute respective comb like formations 20 able to co-operate, in a manner explained below, with the comb like formations of the base 2.

Moreover, each elongated element 16 is formed with a pair of projections, respectively upper projection 21, located immediately below the related comb like formation, and lower projection 22, positioned at the lower end of the related leg 17. The projections 21 and 22 have shapes corresponding to those of the seats 11 and 12 of the uprights 10, and are arranged complementarily thereto. Said projections 21 and 22 are formed integral by moulding with the elongated elements 16.

The reference numbers 23, 24 designated through holes provided in proximity to the upper ends of the uprights 6 and of the elongated elements 16, and whose function is to allow the passage of a transverse bar 25, in the manner explained below.

The number 26 globally indicates a child seat assembly constituted by a backrest part 27, by a seat part 28 and by a wall 29 which posteriorly closes the basket 3, between the two uprights 6.

The function of the comb-like formations 10, 20 and of the groove and tongue organs constituted respectively by the seats 11, 12 and by the projections 21, 22 is to obtain, when the trolley 1 is assembled, a stable union between the basket 3 and the base 2 in such a way as to complete their respective load-bearing structures as a result of their mutual union.

Said union is accomplished by effect of a relative coupling motion between the basket 3 and the base 2 along a direction of coupling (indicated by the arrow F in Figure 2),

substantially parallel to the uprights 6, in such a way as to obtain the coupling between them and the elongated elements 16 of the basket 3. Said coupling occurs by effect of the mutual meshing between the comb like formations 10 and 20, whose projections 9 and 18 slide on each other, positioning themselves in the manner shown in Figure 4, and of the subsequent insertion of the projections 21 and 22 into the seats 11 and 12. At the end of this operation, the basket 3 is stably and firmly fastened relative to the base 2, projecting in overhang from the uprights 6 above the shelf 28 with no need to use auxiliary locking elements.

The assembly is completed by effect of the introduction of the transverse bar 25 through the holes 23 and 24, and of its axial locking in tie rod like fashion in a manner not described in detail, but readily apparent to those versed in the art. The bar 25, whereto the rear wall 29 of the seat assembly 26 is suspended, prevents disengagement between the basket 3 and the base 2 and will normally constitute the support for a tubular handle (not shown herein) for manoeuvring the trolley 3, as well as for a possible token-operated lock for connection to identical trolleys 3 in an aligned, mutually meshed condition.

Naturally, the construction details and the embodiments may be varied widely from what is described and illustrated herein, without thereby departing from the scope of the present invention as defined in the claims that follow. Thus, for instance, the seats 11, 12 and the corresponding projections 21, 22 could be inverted, placing the former on the longitudinal elements 16 of the basket 3 and the latter on the uprights 6. Moreover, the projections 9, 18 of the comb-like formations 10 and 20 could have a more or less oblique conformation relative to the direction of coupling F, and they may also exhibit a slight curvature, and said direction of coupling F could also be different from the one

indicated herein, i.e. not necessarily parallel to the uprights 6 and not even necessarily linear.